

Name: _____ Date: _____

Chapter 9: United States of America

Quick Notes



Section 1: The Land and People of the United States

➤ Essential Question:

- What are some ways the United States is diverse?

Section 1: The Land and People of the United States

➤ What terms do I need to know?

- temperate
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- ethnic group
- First Amendment

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Location and Size

- The United States is on the continent of North America in the western and northern hemispheres.
- The United States is the second largest country in North America, just under Canada, and the third largest in the world.
- It shares its borders with two countries:
 - Canada to the north, which is the longest undefended international border in the world.
 - Mexico to the south, where struggles with illegal immigrants is a constant.

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Climate

- The United States has a variety of climates due to its size.
- The climate is mostly **temperate**, meaning it has moderate temperatures.
 - The southern portions are in a subtropical zone, though, with summers being long and hot and winters usually short and mild.
- Rainfall amounts vary across the country.
 - Some areas only have 2 ½ inches per year, while others can have over 30 inches per year.
- Alaska and Hawaii are extremes of climates in the United States. A good portion of Alaska is in the Arctic Circle and Hawaii is in a tropical zone.

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Physical Features

- The United States has many terrains.
 - Farmlands in central states, Rocky Mountains in the west, hills and the Appalachian Mountains in the east are general examples of land variation.
 - Alaska has mountains and river valleys, and Hawaii has volcanos.
- The lowest point in the States is in Death Valley, California, with the highest point on Mt. McKinley.

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Natural Resources

- The United States has many natural resources used for goods and services.
- Some of the most plentiful include coal, copper, uranium, gold, iron, zinc, petroleum, natural gas, timber, and arable land.
- The United States has the world's largest coal reserves at 27% of the world's total.

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Population Distribution

- With a population of roughly 320 million in 2016, the United States is the third most populated country in the world.
- Urban areas can be densely populated, with 27,000 people per square mile in New York City.
- Less dense areas include mountainous areas, southwestern deserts, dense forests in the north, and the central prairie states.
- 80% of the population lives in urban areas.

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Environmental Issues

- The people of the United States face a number of environmental threats.
- Urban areas are expanding, with natural habitats being cleared for the population, which can lead to extinction for many flora and fauna.
- The desire for energy and water in urban areas has led to the construction of many dams, which can flood areas and have a drastic negative impact on the order of the ecosystem around it.
- Generating power and running engines is largely accomplished by burning fossil fuels, which generate a number of pollutants, which can cause many problems for the planet.
- The United States has begun to work on its pollution problem, with the establishment of the **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** in the early 1970s.
 - The EPA was created to monitor the environment and enforce environmental laws.

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Saving the Bald Eagle

- During World War II and in the years after, Americans used a chemical known as DDT to kill insects and other pests.
- In the mid-20th century, though, scientists began noticing reduced numbers of bald eagles.
- The Bald Eagle Protection Act was passed to protect the nation's symbol, and evidence that DDT was causing the reduced numbers surfaced in the 60's.
 - The chemical would get into the ecosystem, where it would be consumed by the eagles and cause pre-mature egg hatching.
- In 1972, the government banned the use of DDT.
- This ban, along with the protection act, has helped bald eagle populations climb from less than 500 pairs in the 1960s to roughly 10,000 pairs.
 - The bird is still protected, but it is no longer threatened by extinction.

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Race, Ethnicity, Language, and Religion

- An **ethnic group** is a category of people grouped due to a common ancestry, language, or culture.
- Less than 1 out of 100 persons in the United States has a family tree of only Native Americans, with most citizens being descended from immigrants.
- English is the most common language spoken in the United States, with Spanish being the second most common and Chinese third.
- Religion can be defined in many ways:
 - The way people worship, their beliefs about origins or humanity and the world, sacred objects or places, and practices that go with the beliefs.
- The **First Amendment** of the US Constitution protects the religious freedoms of US citizens.
- The largest religious groups today are forms of Christianity, such as Baptists, Methodists, and Roman Catholics.

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Section 2: A Brief History of the United States

- **Essential Question:**
 - Why did the country unite in the American Revolution and divide in the American Civil War?

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Section 2: A Brief History of the United States

- What terms do I need to know?
 - United States Constitution
 - checks and balances
 - American Civil War
 - League of Nations
 - Roaring Twenties
 - Great Depression
 - civil rights movement
 - al-Qaeda
 - World Trade Center
 - Pentagon

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A New Nation

- The United States was formed from 13 British colonies in North America in the late 18th century.
- The nation won its first war, the American Revolutionary War, against its mother country, Great Britain.
 - The Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution described clear, basic rights the founders believed all people should have.
- The **United States Constitution** created a form of government that was split into 3 branches and would have the citizens elect their leaders.
 - A series of **checks and balances** helps ensure no single person or group in government can violate the rights of others.
- Today the United States is a world leader with a powerful military and economy.

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Expansion in the 19th Century

- Between 1800 and 1899, the United States has expanded from just a group of states along the Atlantic to stretching all the way across North America to the Pacific Ocean.
 - New technologies helped fuel this growth.
- The country was almost torn apart however, in 1861, when the **American Civil War** began.
 - Slavery was legal at this time, though it was quite a bit more prominent in the South than in the North.
 - Southerners used the slaves as a labor force, though as time went on, those in the North began to disagree with the practice.
- The American Civil War was the result of this disagreement over slavery and growing tensions between the two sides.
 - Slavery was ended, and southern states that were damaged by the war were rebuilt.

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A World Leader in the 20th Century

- Sides were developing in a European conflict, later known as World War I, and the United States joined Great Britain, France, and Russia, or the Allied Powers.
- In the outcome of World War I, the United States worked to form the **League of Nations** in order to have countries talk out their problems in the future, but the United States did not join.
- The economy of the United States did so well after the war that this time period was called the **Roaring Twenties**.
 - However, a series of problems in the late 20s led to the economic plummet known as the **Great Depression**, which lasted for more than a decade.
- In 1939, war erupted again, with Germany, Italy, and Japan acting as the main Axis Powers against the Allied Powers of Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union as the main members.
 - While the United States did not join until 1941 with Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, they proved to be the deciding factor in the war, providing fresh soldiers in battle and ending the war with the atomic bombing of Japan.

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A World Leader in the 20th Century (cont.)

- At the end of the war, the Soviet Union and the United States became rivals for world power.
- Both the Soviet Union and the United States had nuclear weapons capable of killing hundreds of thousands of people very quickly.
- This conflict, called the Cold War, lasted from 1945 until 1991.
 - It was called a "cold war" because, although there were tense moments and small fights, a total, or "hot" war never broke out.
 - In 1991, the Soviet Union fell apart, and many democracies replaced the old communist systems.
- During the Cold War, the United States was experiencing its own "war" at home in the form of the **civil rights movement**.
 - Civil rights activists pushed for equal rights for all Americans, specifically targeting the African American community.
 - Activists, like Dr. Martin Luther King, worked to ensure African American voting rights as well as ending desegregation in schools and other public domains.

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A World Leader in the 20th Century (cont.)

- On September 11, 2001, Muslim extremist terrorists from the group al-Qaeda hijacked and crashed multiple commercial jets.
 - Two were crashed into the World Trade Center buildings in New York, the third crashed into the Pentagon building in Washington DC, and the fourth was crashed prematurely in an empty field thanks to the efforts of the passengers.
- Nearly 3000 were killed in these attacks, which marked the beginning of other terrorist attacks around the world by the extremists.
- In the 21st century, the United States still struggles with fully implementing their ideas of equality and freedom.
 - However, the United States has the largest economy and most powerful military in the world, enjoys the greatest overall wealth in history, and gives its citizens rights and freedoms protected by the constitution and legal system.

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The Space Race

- The Cold War rivalry took many forms, including nuclear power and a technological race to be the first in space.
- Sputnik, a Soviet satellite in 1957, became the first man-made object to orbit the Earth, followed by the Sputnik II, which carried a dog.
- In 1961, the Soviets sent Yuri Gagarin to be the first man to orbit the Earth.
- In 1962, American John Glenn became the first American to orbit the Earth.
- In 1969, the Americans made it to the moon with their Apollo 11 mission, with astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin taking the first steps on the moon.
 - While technologies and innovations for space flight continued after, the Americans had won the race.

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Section 3: Government of the United States

- Essential Question:
 - What role do citizens have in electing their leaders?

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Section 3: Government of the United States

- What terms do I need to know?
 - Articles of Confederation
 - representative democracy
 - presidential system
 - Congress
 - United States Supreme Court

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Foundations of the Government

- The **Articles of Confederation** were adopted in 1781 as the first plan of government.
- It was replaced with the United States Constitution, and in 1789, George Washington became the first president of the United States.
- Since its inception 200 years ago, the US Constitution has only been changed 27 times.
- The government of the country is based on rule by the people, or the idea of democracy.
 - The United States uses a **representative democracy**, which means the citizens elect representatives to vote on laws and lead the country.
 - The freedom to vote for representatives allows the United States to be described as a republic as well as a democracy.

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Role of the Citizen

- The United States has a **presidential system** of government.
 - This means that the president acts as head of state, which means being a representative of the country to other nations, and head of the executive branch of government.
 - The president is elected by electors who were elected by citizens and has a four year term in office.
- The legislative branch consists of Congress, which is composed of the Senate and House of Representatives, whose members are voted in directly by citizens.
- The judicial branch is made up of the court systems, headed by the United States Supreme Court, the highest court in the land.
 - The US Supreme Court judges (justices) are only nominated by the president and approved by the Senate and can have their jobs for life.
- There are various rules one must abide by to be a voter, including registration before voting day and not being a felon.

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Section 4: Economy of the United States

- Essential question:
 - How is the type of economy in the United States different from other countries you have studied?

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Section 4: Economy of the United States

- What terms do I need to know?
 - marketplace
 - pharmaceuticals

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The US Economy

- In the United States, federal and state governments buy goods and services mostly in the private **marketplace**, making the United States a market economic system.
- Businesses in the United States have fewer restrictions than in Western Europe and Japan, which allows them to make better business decisions quickly.
- The United States has one of the most powerful economies in the world, with an annual \$53,000 GDP per capita.
- Many companies in the United States are leaders in the technology field, such as computers, **pharmaceuticals** (medical drugs), aerospace, and military equipment.

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The US Economy (cont.)

- One concern of the US economy is the developing “two-tier” labor market in which those at the bottom lack the skills and education of those at the top.
 - These unskilled workers fail to get pay raises, health insurance coverage, and other benefits.
- Another problem is the replacement of human workers by technology.
- In 2010, President Obama passed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, a health insurance reform designed to give 32 million Americans health insurance by 2016 through private insurance and Medicaid.

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Trade

- Despite the decrease in exports and imports to the United States between 2014 and 2016, it is still one of the largest exporting countries in the world behind China.
- The United States typically exports agricultural products, industrial supplies, capital goods, and consumer goods with many of these sold to Canada, Mexico, and China.
 - The country imports these same kinds of goods, with most coming from the same three countries.
- The rise and fall of oil prices greatly affects the economy, since more than half the country's oil is imported.
 - Rises in oil prices between 2001 and 2006 caused many to lose their homes, but recent price drops have eased problems.
